

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS BRASILIA 001042

SIPDIS

STATE PASS EPA FOR CAM HILL-MACON AND S.HOFFMAN  
STATE FOR OES/PCI  
STATE FOR OES/ENV JOHN THOMPSON  
STATE FOR WHA/EPSC - LALLEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [TBIO](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [XR](#) [BR](#)

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE MERCURY PROBLEM IN BRAZIL, RESULTS  
OF RESEARCH IN STATE OF PARA

1. Summary: On April 13, 2005, the Brazilian Ministry of Science and Technology released the results of research completed by their Mineral Technology Center (CETEM) aimed at determining the level of mercury contamination of the fish in the waters of the Tapajos river, the principle source of food for the residents of the state of Para. The study revealed that at least 50 percent of the gold miners in the region have health problems caused in part by mercury contamination. The study outlines how mercury contamination resulting from the mining process have destroyed the health of many in the community and harmed the environment.

-----  
The Study  
-----

2. The study Global Mercury Project - Brazil - Removal of Barriers to the Introduction of Cleaner Artisanal Gold Mining and Extraction Technologies, was conducted and funded by CETEM and Evandro Chagas Institute (IEC) and coordinated by GEF and the UN. Initiated in 2003, Brazil was one of six countries studied. Two mining areas in the Tapajos River Basin were selected in Brazil - one phase studied the impact on the environment and the other focused on damage to the health of the people of the community.

-----  
Risks to Humans  
-----

3. The study revealed that 65 percent of fish samples collected had a mercury concentration above accepted WHO levels, reaching as high as 40 percent above. Of the 700 people examined, 50 percent had elevated mercury levels in their bodies.

4. Another study carried out by IEC showed that 60 percent of newborns in Itaituba (a city along the Tapajos River) born between February and December 2002 suffered impacts of mercury contamination. In the 1980s this region was one of the largest gold mining sites in the country.

-----  
GOB Response  
-----

5. The results of the study were discussed in a conference held in Brasilia on April 13, organized by the Brazilian Ministry of Science and Technology. Many proposals to alleviate this program were discussed, including the most obvious of tougher enforcement, since the use of mercury in gold mining is forbidden under Brazilian law. The only measure officially announced was the launch of a public information campaign, targeted towards local miners, on the dangers of the use of mercury in gold mining.

DANILOVICH